



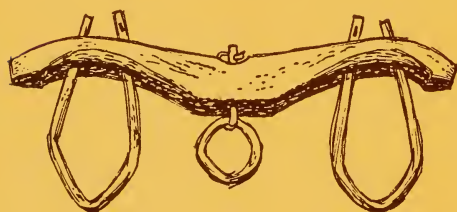
THE
DIXON
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
JEFFERSON DAVIS
TRADITION

By
FRANK E. STEVENS



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MEMORIAL


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THE DIXON ABRAHAM LINCOLN JEFFERSON DAVIS TRADITION

Frank E. Stevens

WHEN asked to speak at this meeting, held as it is on Douglas's birthday, my first thought was to select Douglas for my subject and carry him into his relations with Lincoln. But upon the suggestion of your secretary that it might be well to relate experiences encountered by one who pursues historical investigations for useful material, I caught the point and the spirit instantly, and since making the plunge I am wondering why a subject so interesting—I may say dramatic—has not been exploited sooner by those who have been afield.

You who have tried to separate fact from fiction and tradition, in your historical researches, know well enough from hard experience of the conflicts the biographer has been compelled to wage and to weather before he may place before his reader the acceptable printed page. Your experiences may have differed from mine, of course, but only in instance, and I may say here in the beginning that my initiation into the unmanageable contrarities of history was almost a Waterloo. This jolt was given me while trying to support a treasured tradition of my birthplace, Dixon, Illinois. Here my life began; here my love for Illinois history began and developed; here my

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troubles began in that behalf and here I met my first defeat, the Waterloo in question.

Since the year 1832, Dixon had cherished for its exclusive own the most dramatic picture of all American history. On its sacred soil, we had been taught that Abraham Lincoln had raised his hand and sworn before Almighty God to support the Constitution of the United States and to fight his country's battles to the best of his ability. Before him stood Second Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, U. S. A., who had administered that oath, and, the oath once administered, the two, with the army, marched up Rock River in pursuit of the renegade Black Hawk. A wonderful picture, this! And I doubt if another tradition, surrounded with such glamour, can be contributed to the nation's annals by the most confirmed pipe-dreamer who has ever reveled in flights of fancy.

Do you doubt, therefore, the fighting sincerity of our Dixon population in supporting this famous tradition, vouched for as it was by responsible men, who "were on the spot" when it happened? So vouched, with what serenity we youngsters elevated our chins and carried this famous story out into the world upon reaching man's estate! What complacency was ours when others attempted to rival us until, all on a summer day, there came into our midst a writer who with iconoclastic malice aforethought proceeded to debunk our treasured tradition by informing us that Jefferson Davis never had served in the Black Hawk War at all. The shock to our people was more devastating than the earthquake that swept California. Indeed, no seismic spasm could do the damage this debunking writer demoniacally did for us. And what is more, the debunking artist had with her the papers, two of them, to prove her contention ostensibly. We were prepared to feed her a dose of rat poison, but there were the abominable papers! One of them

was a copy of Davis' application for a furlough which was granted before the Black Hawk War broke out, and the other was a copy of his report back to duty after the war had ended, and on the authority of those two records a new chapter was to be written into the life of Abraham Lincoln, and Dixon and its traditions were thereafter to be scorned.

Dixon was distraught. What was to be done? I was the guy selected to do the doing: to murder this record and if need were to murder its backer too. I was to prove that, against the word of the man who "was there," records were nil; that this debunking murderess must be burned at the stake and that I must start the fire. So I started. First I found the records at Washington bore out the writer's contention; they had been copied accurately, and I was headed aimlessly afield on my first wild-goose chase. The only pole star I had for guidance was my general disbelief in the stability of negative propositions under the acid test. Father Dixon had vouched for the tradition, and he was a truthful man. Eagerly I sought him, and for pointer number one he sent me to his granddaughter, Miss Louise Dixon; she had some documents, too, and she showed them to me. One was a letter from George W. Jones, of Dubuque, Iowa, and the other was a letter from A. C. Dodge, from Burlington, Iowa. The writers were the two first United States Senators from Iowa. Jones had been a classmate of Davis at Transylvania, a cadet at West Point with Davis, and at Davis's funeral had been one of the pallbearers. These letters both substantiated Davis's presence in the war as John Dixon's statement had done, by declaring that Davis belonged to their mess in camp to the end of the war. So far, so good. Next, Davis's description of the battle of Wisconsin Heights had been copied into one of the annuals of the Wisconsin Historical Society, with a statement by Davis himself, in which he asserted his

service in the war. Next I found in the Congressional Record a speech made by Davis in the United States Senate, for the purpose of assisting Father Dixon to secure a land warrant for his service in the war. In that speech he asserted his service in the war. But those accusing records! Later I went to Des Moines, Iowa, to see Charles Aldrich, secretary of the Iowa Historical Society, and he added a personal interview he had had with Davis, in which Davis said out and out that he had participated in the war with Lincoln. Along with other evidence, I found in Black Hawk's autobiography the statement that Davis was the officer who had charge of him while traveling from Fort Crawford to Fort Armstrong, after Black Hawk's capture. This was a long and tiresome effort, but old Dixon stood vindicated in its claim that Davis and Lincoln had been there in 1832 as companions in arms.

But if Davis had been given a furlough, how could he enjoy it and fight through the war at the same time, statement or no statement and speech or no speech, to the contrary? Another almost remarkable, and at the same time altogether pleasant, explanation came to the rescue through the great kindness of George Wilson, of Lexington, Missouri, when we bumped into each other as we did during my long years of exploration.

George Wilson laid the story before me: His father, Lieutenant George Wilson, was stationed at Fort Crawford—Prairie du Chien—in 1832, and, with the troops of Zachary Taylor and General Atkinson, came to Dixon. He was the chum and confidant of Davis and delivered letters between Davis and Miss Taylor when an elopement was contemplated. Davis had started down the Mississippi for Kentucky on his furlough, but when at or near Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, he met Atkinson and his troops preparing for their departure up-stream on April 8th, once more to drive back Black Hawk

who was preparing for another raid into Illinois, he abandoned his furlough and returned to Fort Armstrong with Atkinson. With this positive explanation, I should have felt justified in handing our debunking friend, who was trying to steal old Dixon's glory, a piece of my mind.

Fortunately I kept still, because Wilson was mistaken. With the further information I secured from Washington, I learned that Davis left Fort Crawford March 26, 1832, on his sixty-day furlough and went straight to Mississippi, where he passed the sixty-day period. Once more I found myself at sea, struggling not only with this later information but with the almost hopeless odds added that on May 26, the day of the expiration of his furlough, Davis applied for the four months additional period allowed in his original furlough if desired. Furthermore I learned that this application for the additional four months had been allowed on July 21, just a few days before the termination of the war. I have a photostatic copy of Davis application and here it is:

May 26, 1832
Woodville, Mississippi

SIR

With the permission of the Commandg Genl. of the Western Dept. granted in Special Order No. 1—issued at Memphis Tenn. 16 January 1832 I have the honor to forward this my application for an extension of my furlough by four additional months

Very Respectfully
Yr. mo. obt. Servt.
JEFF DAVIS
L. 1. Infantry

To MAJ. GENL. A. MACOMB
Commandg. U. S. Army
Head Qrs. Washington D. C.

Distances were long in those days, and much time was required in getting messages to their destination; in this case it

was July 21 when the request was granted, nearly two months, or one half the time asked for. By May 26, however, the Indians had whipped Stillman and other bands had massacred the members of the Pettigrew-Davis settlement. A call had been made for troops for a second campaign, and newspapers at St. Louis, Louisville, New Orleans in the South, and for that matter papers all over the country, were filled with stories of what had happened and what might happen. Governor Reynolds issued a call for more militiamen to start a second campaign. The situation became so acute that President Jackson ordered Scott and his available men to start at once for the west. The seriousness of these Indian disorders reached Lieutenant Davis at once along with the news of Jackson's action, and he lost no time in dropping his furlough (long before July 21) and getting into this second campaign with his regiment. Indeed, I have a very old letter from H. H. Gear, of Galena, captain of a company of miners, that says Lieutenant Jefferson Davis was sent from Dixon's Ferry to Galena to drill his company, a very important link in the chain I found afield.

Davis did not participate in the Wisconsin battle because that battle was fought exclusively by the state troops, but in rejoining the militia he passed directly over the field and became thoroughly familiar with it, thus enabling him to write his description of it later. At the battle of the Bad Axe he was present and participated in it. Black Hawk ran away from this fight and when he was later found hidden in the fastnesses of the Wisconsin woods, he was turned over to Davis.

Robert Anderson, who went through the war, later tried to claim the honor of escorting Black Hawk, but at Galena, Anderson was sent elsewhere. In the first campaign, Atkinson left Jefferson Barracks on April 8 and reached Fort Armstrong on the 12, thus demonstrating that after May 26,

Davis might have reached his regiment in eight or nine days. At all events, he did reach Dixon's Ferry, and that proves one half of our tradition. On June 25 Dement's battle was fought, and on that same date the new levies of troops reached Dixon's Ferry to start the final drive on Black Hawk's forces up on Lake Koshkonong, to which country Black Hawk had retreated after the Dement and Snyder engagements. Thus it will be seen that after May 26 Davis would have ample time to reach his regiment, as he did.

But how about the swearing-in feature? Ah! the pain of it! As I shall tell you in a minute, I found a letter from Nathaniel Buckmaster written to his wife the day after the troops were sworn into the service which proves conclusively that Atkinson swore the troops into the service at the mouth of Rock River, at the beginning of the first campaign, while Davis was in Mississippi.

Having at last landed Davis in Dixon, I determined to go forward and secure documents and pictures for use in writing a history of this war and pay my respects to Black Hawk at the same time. This meant real field work and a visit to as many of the survivors of that war as I could find. Pictures especially were my object.

Beginning with Samuel Whiteside, commander in chief of the first army, I fortunately found a daughter who had the only picture made of him. This I obtained. Next I wanted the next officer in command, Brigade Major Nathaniel Buckmaster, and here my real fun in field work began. For a solid year I worked in the vicinity where I fancied I should succeed, but without results. At last, while at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, I resumed my efforts. The young lady at the desk could afford me no information. But a gentleman sitting near had stopped his investigations to listen to my story. He intro-

duced himself as Judge Douglas, president of the society. He suggested that I run over to Alton and find a lady there, Mrs. Curran, who was a daughter of Major Buckmaster and who, he felt sure, had a picture of her father. With little or no delay I went to Alton, found Mrs. Curran, a charming lady, who said she had the picture and I should have a copy of it. The picture was sent to the photographer to be copied, and the interim following permitted me to mention my work. And right here there came to me a reward that seldom falls to the lot of mortal man. Mrs. Curran said she had many papers pertaining to the Black Hawk War which she would and did present to me in the hope they would be useful in my work. Once back home, I unfolded them. The first one was the muster roll of Captain, later Governor Carlin, all written in his own hand. The muster roll of Captain John Dement followed. In rapid succession I unfolded practically every general order issued during the war. Better yet, Atkinson's orders, all of them in the handwriting of Lieutenant Albert Sidney Johnston, were found; he was adjutant to Atkinson and had come up the Mississippi River with the army. I found many appraisements made by officers of property stolen by the soldiers while passing through the villages of Kapas and Shabbona, on their way to Ottawa to be mustered out of the service, which most of them had disgraced. These extraordinary finds should be enough to satiate most men to the point of bursting, but let me tell you what followed. Next there appeared the muster roll of Captain Abraham Lincoln, every word of it written by himself, the first official document he ever signed. Wrapped within it the usual copy, but written by a clerk, was found, to which a certificate was attached in the handwriting of John J. Hardin, Inspector General. Many times since that eventful day, when caught between the millstones of panic or depression, I have

been offered attractive sums for these papers; thoughts of those days make me shiver, but I set my teeth together tightly and I am here before you today to say that I still own and possess all those papers. I found them while afield, and who is there to say that thus rewarded, there is no pleasure in field work?

In that same bunch of papers was included the letter that definitely established the fact that Jefferson Davis did not swear into the service Captain Abraham Lincoln. Pride in my old Dixon tradition had been exploded. But, I ask, would you not let your traditions go hang for the reward I had received? And would you not throw up your hats at defeat of any of your traditions if assured of such a compensating success?

This letter, written by Brigade Major Nathaniel Buckmaster to his wife, contained the information that on the day before the letter was written, Atkinson had sworn all the troops into the service at the mouth of Rock River. True, Reynolds in his *My Own Times* says the troops were sworn into the service at the mouth of Rock River by Atkinson, but here I had the better record. It was mine. It smashed an important part of my tradition to smithereens, but I was yielded a fifty-fifty victory at least and I had a useful experience in the matter of accepting negative values. And I repeat, the evidence was mine. Of course Lincoln later enlisted in three separate companies during the war, and Davis might have been the mustering officer in either of the other two, but by indisputable evidence I learned that Lieutenant Robert Anderson officiated in the other instances.

The city of Dixon contributed much to the formative period of Lincoln's life, but I am sorry to admit that its contributions were exploited in a manner so bungling and confusing as to deprive them of the greater share of their value. Here is another instance.

Little by little Lincoln had been forging ahead in public attention and estimation until the year 1856 arrived, the year of the "Lost Speech"; the year when he definitely arrayed himself as an out-and-out anti-slavery man in the ranks of the new political party, the Republican. He was supporting Fremont for president, and Dixon members of the new party, desiring to ratify suitably that nomination, arranged for a big demonstration there, to which the most prominent men of the new party had been invited to speak, Lincoln among the number. The meeting was a wonderful success, and years afterwards members of the G. A. R., desiring to honor the date and to mark the spot, erected a beautiful boulder in the court house square and fastened thereupon a large bronze tablet bearing these words:

LINCOLN
STOOD HERE WHILE
DELIVERING
HIS GREAT SPEECH
SEPT. 8, 1856.

*Erected by
Dixon Post No. 299 G. A. R.,
August 7, 1903.*

Being tolerably familiar with Lincoln's movements at that period, I called attention to the palpable error and was promptly challenged to prove my contention, thus reversing my duties of years before. I was compelled to accept the challenge, and my first move was to appeal to Mrs. Jessie Palmer Weber, of the Illinois State Historical Society, who promptly quoted a story appearing in a Springfield paper, that Lincoln had made a speech in Springfield on the afternoon of Septem-

ber 8, 1856, and that was that—hopelessly killing the legend on the bronze tablet.

Rather angrily I was ordered to get the right date if I knew so much about it, and this I proceeded to try, at least, to do. The wise ones who fixed the date were guided by a rumor that Lincoln went from Dixon to Oregon and there made another speech the next day. Pursuant to that tradition, the Oregon people placed a boulder on the spot and made the date September 9, 1856. I went to Oregon to get the Oregon version. There I was told that the Oregon people had discovered their error and that the date should be August 16 instead of September 9, and that the Dixon date should be August 15, the day before Oregon's meeting. I was told further that an old gentleman who had kept a diary had set the date down as August 16, 1856, and to fortify the accuracy of the diary, a notice was found in the *Chicago Democrat*, fixing the date August 16, so, of course, the Dixon date should be August 15.

In the nature of things I should have been satisfied to have proved the error and thus, by securing the correct date, have rested content. But—one of those insufferable “buts”! At about this time an old *Dixon Telegraph* turned up dated July 12, 1856, that contained a complete program for a ratification meeting proposed for July 17, 1856, at which Joseph Knox, Judge Kneeland, Francis A. Hoffman, Dr. Egan, John Wentworth, Judge Denio, Thomas J. Turner, “and several others” had been invited to be present, but no Lincoln name appeared. The committee on speakers, James L. Camp, C. N. Levanway, and Cyrus Aldrich, however, were expected to attend to that feature carefully, and carefully and acceptably they did attend to it by inviting Lincoln to make the speech. This he did, as I was able to learn definitely through the assistance of Senator

George C. Dixon, who found a file of the *Amboy Times*, of date Thursday, July 24, 1856, that carried this announcement:

Last Thursday [July 17] we, with a large number of our citizens went to Dixon to attend the ratification meeting at that place, and we trust no one regretted their attendance. We heard several excellent speeches, but the speech of the day was made by Honorable Abraham Lincoln, one of our electors at large. When loudly called for, he arose, not with slow and dignified motion, but quick as a flash, and lo! what a man. He is about six feet high, crooked-legged, stoop shouldered, spare built, and anything but handsome in the face. It is plain that nature took but little trouble in fashioning his outer man, but a gem may be encased in a rude casket.

His first remarks were not of a character to overcome the unfavorable impression which his uncouth appearance made, but when he had spoken some five or ten minutes, he began to warm up on the subject. He laid out his field of operations, and when he had finished his work, we, with one accord pronounced it good. Not a stone was left unturned; not an obstacle or objection unremoved. As a close observer and cogent reasoner, he has few equals and perhaps no superior in the world. His language is pure and respectful; he attacks no man's character or motives, but fights with arguments.

We have heard a good many political speeches in our time, but never, we think, one equal to his. He spoke full two hours and still the audience cried, "Go on."

The date now is settled—July 17, 1856, "but," again, he did not go to Oregon the next day. He went to Sterling, and when I had finished my work, Fairfield had the doubtful date of August 15 on its hands instead of Dixon with this bit of news outstanding, printed August 8, 1856, in a Springfield paper: "SOUTHERN ILLINOIS AWAKE:—A grand meeting of the Fremonters is to be held at Fairfield, Wayne County, on the 15 with a barbecue and dinner. Col. Bissell, Hon. A. Lincoln, Gov. Koerner, H. P. H. Bromwell, F. Kitchell, T. F. Houts

and W. H. Harrow, Esqs., will be present and address the people on the political questions of the day."

From the Daily Democrat Press, Chicago, Saturday morning, July 19, 1856, found in the Chicago Historical Society archives and which is conclusive, one learns:

FREMONT MEETING AT DIXON

A large and enthusiastic meeting was held at Dixon on Thursday last. Speeches were made by J. J. Beardsley, Hon. A. Lincoln and John Wentworth, in the afternoon and in the evening the people were addressed by J. C. Vaughan, Mr. Farnsworth and Hon. T. J. Turner. The speakers dealt terrible and telling blows upon the iniquitous schemes of the political tricksters at Washington, who have disgraced our country and brought it to the very verge of ruin. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed. Fremont and Dayton, Bissell and Hoffman are sure to carry a sweeping majority in Lee County.

Was ever a more diabolical mix-up uncovered? Dare I make one more reference to a Dixon-Lincoln mix-up? No doubt you all have seen the magnificent statue of him there on Lincoln Highway, and you will recall the sturdy pair of boots which adorn his feet. Well, to be accurate, they should be shoes.

But may I turn to another feature of field work that is fraught with infinite pleasure, even though the usual unrequited efforts and disappointments are met, that of collecting pictures? These, of course, must be found as well as facts, and sometimes both together by a person afield. In this branch of my work my experience has been rewarded. I have been given respectful, yes generous, support always, save in one isolated case. This solitary exception I will mention later. Delays, sometimes aggravating, are met, as a matter of course, but the investigator who keeps everlastingly at it has his reward sooner or later. My longest search was the one made to get a picture of Alexander P. Field, one time secretary of state of Illinois, sec-

retary of the Territory of Wisconsin, and later a duly elected Republican member of congress—from Louisiana. He also had occupied a high position in the Black Hawk War which brought him first to my attention.

His long-drawn-out fights with McClernand and Douglas, who tried to oust him while secretary of state in Illinois, had made it very desirable to get his picture. Long and patiently I followed him to his first Illinois home, then to Springfield, thence to Wisconsin, thence down the Mississippi river to New Orleans, where he located and commenced the practice of the law. I wrote to public men, to librarians, to collectors, and at the end of three years my labor had been unrequited. At New Orleans I had found librarians to have the best grasp upon its public men, but not one could give me the slightest encouragement. At last I sent to the New Orleans Picayune a "personal" for insertion. This personal happened to be read by an old gentleman seated in Madam Begay's coffee shop and later, from him I got my first bite. It came in a letter stating that he had long known Field in his lifetime and if I was willing to pay for a picture he thought he might find one for me. I lost no time in offering to pay and he lost no time starting his search, which was aggravatingly slow for a time, but after approximately six months had elapsed, my coffee shop friend advised me he had located a picture that I might have the use of for ten dollars. The ten dollars was sent and in due course, the picture of Field came and, heaven be praised, he enclosed with it another of Field seated, with his wife standing by his side. I certainly sent up a shout, because by that time four years had elapsed. Already I had written a biography of him for the Illinois State Historical Society, and now I could and did finish it with the added feature of the two pictures. To have secured the pictures was glory enough for writing the story of him.

In following this long, long trail, every minute spent was a pleasant one, though many times a tiresome one, and after a fellow had made so many sacrifices of time, energy and money to get such a picture, you would think it had achieved a sanctity sufficient to receive, when used by others, an acknowledgment of its first appearance and to credit the owner for that appearance. But alas! little the average person or agency, nowadays, cares for sanctity and so, many times, my Field pictures have been used by parvenues and elbow biographers without giving credit to the finder and owner. I am so unkind as to believe that some of them are debunking artists on an expedition that will permit them to startle the world with another magnificent piece of guess-work.

Now for the isolated case just referred to, which though excessively troublesome, had its humorous features:

I was more than anxious to locate a picture of a certain captain in the Black Hawk War, by reason of his civic and political prominence, but particularly for his family relationship with others of great prominence in the nation. My search was a long one. I had been referred to at least twenty-five people and to as many places that would likely yield the desired picture, but in each case but one I was disappointed. I finally located a picture in a southern Illinois city, but with its discovery my troubles had but just begun. It was owned by a son, miles and miles from the old home of the captain. In answer to my polite request for a copy of this picture for which I would be glad to pay in advance, the son and owner replied that he had the picture, but he was a busy man with no time to lose on such foolish errands. This unfilial response was coarse enough to eternally damn him, but when he added that "the old man never had done anything for him [the son] and he knew of no reason why he should trouble himself to do anything for the

old man," long since deceased, naturally I was furious at such indecent treatment of a parent and I may have said many harsh things about the son. I wrote to a photographer who I hoped by a personal interview might soften that son's obduracy by relieving him of trouble, but without avail; the fellow refused to let the photographer so much as see the picture. After such an exhibition of meanness, I resolved to get a copy of that picture by committing burglary, if no other alternative appeared, in order to get that copy. But good fortune and the alternative appeared almost miraculously in the most fortuitous manner imaginable by locating for me a brother in another part of the state, upon whose shoulders I unloaded my troubles. Was he angry? With warmth he grunted, "Huh!" From this I knew I was safe and I repeated, "Yes. Huh!" "That brother of mine" he said, "got everything my father had and while I am talking about it I may say I have a half interest in that picture."

While my comment might not be put down as a classic, it enlisted the brother's support and ultimately got me a copy of the picture. I proposed that he permit me to replevin the picture in his name. He agreed and furthermore signed the affidavit and bond. I furthermore proposed the instant the constable got hold of it to rush it over to the photographer to be copied; to let the suit go by default, pay the costs and shake my copy under the fellow's nose and tell him then to go hang. I pursued my program, got the picture copied in half an hour, but instead of waiting for the suit—just to rub it in—I personally returned the picture with an explanation of what had been done.

"Well, I'll be hanged," was his comment, but he never was hanged. He later went to the cemetery like a mortal of better parts.

In conclusion may I touch briefly some of the few other little discoveries met in my rambles for facts in the countrysides of events. By sheerest accident I ran across a photographer from Vermont who told me just how another man named Morse provided the magnificent torso in Saint-Gaudens' statue of Lincoln found in Lincoln Park, Chicago. The effort to secure a picture of Morse after that was so easy as to have been uneventful, but it made a fine story. In working at Black Hawk it became a positive necessity to secure a picture of Fort Dixon. No contemporaneous picture of it was ever made, of course. But when Noah Brooks, the friend of Lincoln, lived in Dixon, he painted at Father Dixon's dictation a picture of the old Dixon store-ferry house and on the north side of Rock River he sketched from the same dictation a miniature of Fort Dixon with its embankment of sod around it. This I showed to Jacob De Pue, who as a child had played around the old fort before it had rotted and been pulled down. He sketched it as he remembered it. Another Dixon man named John L. Lord also had played about the same old fort as a child and to him I took the sketch. He made some suggestions of change, which De Pue made. Colonel John Dement suggested another change or two, which De Pue made. I also had found at Shabonier, just south of Decatur, a soldier in the Black Hawk War who as a carpenter had worked at building the fort. When I supposed the picture was complete, I sent it to him for the last once over, and he made a suggestion about the portholes which De Pue, Lord, and Dement agreed was a fact but forgotten by all. This suggestion in the plan was followed, and a first-class picture of Fort Dixon was provided. The drawing I had copied in oil, and that oil painting I gave to the Dixon Public Library.

Fakes, too, are met often by the man afield, and I know of none so smooth as the one of Lincoln with cloak thrown over

a shoulder. When this appeared as a new and wonderful find, collectors literally bought out the market. But presently the hoax was discovered by a wise old collector who promptly exposed it, and that ended the vogue of that very raw deal. It was a picture of John C. Calhoun, with the Calhoun head removed and the Lincoln head substituted.

Of all the aggravating features one meets, however, the worst is the devastating path of the debunking artists, beginning with the ones who branded the Weems cherry-tree story as untrue—which reminds me that the cherry-tree story seems to be coming into its own with late historians. Lately the Ann Rutledge story is being savagely attacked by the hypothetical historian. A hypothetical biographer named Johnson tried to destroy the greatest victory ever won by Lincoln over Douglas at Peoria in October, 1854, vouched for by almost a dozen who were on the ground—men who knew, including Herndon, William Jayne (who wrote me a letter to the effect that he knew Herndon's story to be true literally), Judge McCulloch, who repeated it to me, Whitney, and others. These hypothetical historians belong to the same class that hires an agency to look up pictures with which to illustrate their so called "works." Of all depravities, this is the last word in hypothetical degeneracy. But let us forget it. To follow a quest that has for its object the correction of foolish blunders like the Bulbona story about Zachary Taylor and Jefferson Davis in 1832 is a soulless and unfruitful quest. But one must expect it and then one must go afield to correct it.

The written book is done. It may be bound in straight-grained levant; it may present the most beautiful features of gold tooling; it may have the added fad of fore-edge painting; but its contemplation is pleasantest when running back afield and recalling the scenes contacted and the friends one has

made in order to assemble its contents. Yes, the friends; the true-blue, fighting friends one finds and holds. I have some of them before me this minute; most of them with a common hobby. Yes indeed, Polonius, we'll grapple them to our soul with hooks of steel. Big, generous, soulful comrades—friends! How I love to meet them, but better yet, to mix with them as I am privileged to do today!





